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TAGS: PREL PGOV UNSC
SUBJECT: BAN BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL ON BERLIN QUARTET MEETING

¶1. Summary: In a private meeting with the Security Council held June 1, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon briefed on the May 30 meeting of the Quartet Principals in Berlin, tracking closely issues covered in the May 30 Quartet Statement. He also mentioned the situation in Lebanon, expressing concern about the confrontation between the Palestinian militia Fatah al-Islam and the LAF, and reporting Prime Minister Siniora's gratitude for the adoption of UNSCR 1757 on the Special Tribunal. Ban responded to a French question about Quartet discussions of an international monitoring mechanism to support a Gaza ceasefire with a description of the dim prospects for introduction of an international force (sic). He reported that UNSCO Michael Williams would travel again to the region. Although the Secretary-General's statement implied Williams' trip related to his duties as UNSCO, in fact Williams intends to travel o/a June 9 to consult on the upcoming UNSCR 1701 report (which imposed a cessation of hostilities between Hizballah and Israel following last summer's war). End Summary.

¶2. On the situation in Gaza, Ban noted that the Quartet had called for an end to Palestinian factional violence and urged all to act in support of Abu Mazen's call for a National Unity Government and for a ceasefire. Ban said, parenthetically, that his Special Middle East Coordinator Michael Williams had advised him that the UN could not operate effectively in the territories without an end to the violence. Ban also reported that the Quartet had called for an end to Qassam rocket attacks into southern Israel, and for the release of Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit. At the same time, the Quartet had called for the release of Palestinian legislators and ministers, urged Israeli restraint, noted the dire economic circumstances of the Palestinian people, urged progress on movement and access issues, noted that the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) had been extended for three months, and urged Israel to consider the resumption of the transfer of tax revenues to the Palestinian Authority. Ban then referred to June 1 press reports that suggested some tax revenues might be forthcoming. He also mentioned that he had been pleased to see that "proof of life" had been provided for captured BBC correspondent Alan Johnston.

¶3. Ban said that there were helpful bilateral and regional tracks in progress: planned meetings between Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas, meetings on the margins of Quartet meetings with Arab countries and the parties, and the next meeting of the Quartet at the end of June. He said that the Quartet saw the Arab Peace Initiative as a welcome political horizon that would complement the work of the Quartet.

¶4. Ban touched briefly on Lebanon, noting that a full-fledged offensive seemed to be occurring at the Nahr El-Bared refugee camp. He said he had spoken to Prime Minister Siniora and offered his full support. Siniora in turn had expressed his appreciation for the Security Council's adoption of UNSCR

1757 on the Special Tribunal. Ban promised to consult closely with the Security Council and the government of Lebanon on the implementation of UNSCR 1757.

Security Council Members React

¶ 15. Most Security Council delegations limited their comments to thanking the Secretary-General for providing the briefing and reiterating their support for Quartet positions. Qatar, South Africa and Indonesia, however, criticized the Quartet May 30 statement and Quartet positions. While deplored Palestinian factional violence, Qatar stated that the root cause of the conflict is the continuing Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and called on the Quartet to take "decisive action" to bring an end to that occupation. South Africa said that while Pretoria welcomed language in the May 30 statement addressing the problem of violence, South Africa would have preferred the statement to call on both sides to renounce violence. South Africa also argued that the Quartet's support of a request that Israel transfer Palestinian tax revenues through the TIM would constitute a reversal of the Oslo agreement, put the Palestinians in the position of receiving financial assistance with its own money, render the Palestinian Authority dependent on an external mechanism, and effectively marginalize the Palestinian Authority. Indonesia suggested the next Quartet statement should call on both sides to renounce violence so as to accurately reflect what was really happening on the ground, and urged the Quartet to consider "decisive action" to promote peace. France welcomed the inclusion of regional partners and the Palestinians and Israelis in the upcoming meeting, and asked if the Quartet had considered the use of international observers to support a ceasefire in Gaza.

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¶ 16. Ambassador Khalilzad welcomed the upcoming calendar of regional consultations, including the API follow-up meetings, the planned Olmert/Abbas meeting, and the June Quartet meeting in Cairo. He also reaffirmed U.S. support for Prime Minister Siniora and the LAF in the confrontation with Fatah al-Islam.

KHALILZAD